

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for handling microparticles (22) that bind a desired component from a sample, comprising:

(a) providing a vessel (26), wherein the vessel contains microparticles (22) in a solution (23), wherein the solution comprises a sample, wherein the sample comprises a desired biological component, wherein the desired component is selected from the group consisting of: a nucleic acid, a protein, a peptide, a cell organelle, a bacterium, a cell, and a virus;

(b) incubating the microparticles and the sample in the vessel for a time sufficient for the microparticles to bind the desired component from the sample;

(c) performing at least two treatment steps of the microparticles (22) in the vessel (26) with a magnetic tool (10) equipped with a protective shield (21) or coating wherein the microparticles are not moved to another vessel, and wherein the microparticles (22) are magnetic particles selected from the group consisting of: ferromagnetic particles, paramagnetic particles, and superparamagnetic particles, wherein the magnetic tool comprises a ferromagnetic sleeve;

wherein the at least two treatment steps in the vessel comprise:

at least one change of solutions (23) comprising removing one solution from the vessel and adding another solution to the vessel, wherein the microparticles (22) are collected and bound on the protective shield (21) or coating of the magnetic tool (10) during the at least one change of solutions (23); ~~and~~

at least one mixing, wherein the microparticles (22) are mixed in the vessel (26) by moving the magnetic tool (10) in the solution (23) containing the microparticles thereby mixing the microparticles; and

wherein the vessel is a tube or a well.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising:
 - (a) collecting the microparticles (22) in the solution to the inner surface of the vessel (26) by an external magnet (13) during at least one change of solutions (23);
 - (b) homogenizing the microparticles (22) from the inner surface of the vessel (26) to the solution (23) in the vessel using the magnetic tool (10);
 - (c) binding the microparticles to the protective shield or coating of the magnetic tool; and
 - (d) transferring the microparticles (22) out of the vessel (26) to another vessel (26) using the magnetic tool (10).
4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising:
 - (a) washing the microparticles with a wash solution (23);
 - (b) removing the wash solution (23) by removing the wash solution in the vessel (26) and adding another solution to the vessel, or
binding the microparticles to the protective shield or coating of the magnetic tool and transferring the microparticles (22) out of the vessel (26) to another vessel (26) using the magnetic tool (10).
5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the magnetic tool (10) further comprises an elastomeric membrane or bellows covering the magnetic tool.
6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the vessel (26) is closed while mixing the solution (23) containing the microparticles.
7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising:
 - (a) collecting the microparticles in the solution (23) on the inner surface of the vessel (26) by an external magnet (13) during at least one change of solutions (23);
 - (b) homogenizing the microparticles (22) from the inner surface of the vessel to the solution (23) using the magnetic tool;

(c) performing the at least one mixing of the microparticles by moving the magnetic tool (10) in the solution (23) containing the microparticles;
(d) washing the microparticles in a wash solution (23); and
(e) removing the wash solution (23) in the vessel (26) by removing the wash solution in the vessel (26) and adding another solution to the vessel, or binding the microparticles to the protective shield or coating of the magnetic tool and transferring the microparticles (22) out of the vessel (26) to another vessel (26) using the magnetic tool (10).

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising collecting the microparticles (22) in the solution (23) on the inner surface of the vessel (26) using an external magnet (13) having a ferromagnetic sleeve (12) during at least one change of solutions (23).

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising:
(a) collecting the microparticles (22) in the solution (23) on the inner surface of the vessel (26) using an external magnet (13) having a ferromagnetic sleeve (12) during at least one change of solutions (23);
(b) closing the vessel with a protective membrane made of elastomeric material;
(c) homogenizing the microparticles (22) from the inner surface of the vessel to the solution (23) using the magnetic tool or a pipette;
(d) binding the microparticles to the protective shield or coating of the magnetic tool; and
(e) transferring the microparticles (22) out of the vessel (26) to another vessel using the magnetic tool (10).

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, comprising:
(a) collecting the microparticles (22) on a filter (77) on the bottom of the vessel (26), during at least one change of solutions;
(b) removing at least a part of one solution (23) through the filter;
(c) adding another solution (23) through the filter (77);

(d) binding the microparticles to the protective shield or coating of the magnetic tool; and

(e) transferring the microparticles (22) out of the vessel (26) to another vessel using the magnetic tool (10).

11-21. (Canceled)